Adventure Tourism Market Study 2013

Adventure Travel Trade Asscoiation

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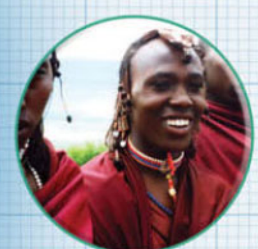

THE GEORGE WASHINGTON UNIVERSITY
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ADVENTURE TRAVEL TRADE ASSOCIATION
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Executive Summary

The Adventure Tourism Market Study provides a view of the adventure travel market by looking at three key regions: Europe, North America, and South America. According to the United Nations World Tourism Organization (UNWTO), these three regions account for 69 percent of overall international departures. The size and nature of the adventure travel market from these three regions were estimated using the results of a representative survey of 838 international travelers. The study uses the same methodology and approach as the 2010 Adventure Tourism Market Study, enabling comparison between the studies and growth trend analysis.

In 2012 Nearly 42 percent of travelers from these three regions reported an adventure activity as the main activity of their last trip, which would project to an adventure travel market worth $263 billion. This is a significant increase from the 2010 Adventure Tourism Market Study in which the adventure tourism market from these regions was valued at $89 billion. From 2009 to 2012, the adventure travel market had an estimated average yearly growth of 65 percent.

The growth in the market was driven by an increase in international tourism departures, increase in the percentage of European and South American travelers classified as adventure travelers, and an increase in the average spend of adventure travelers from all three regions.

The study also provides a profile of the demographics, psychographics, and behaviors of the adventure traveler. Key findings include:

- Adventure travelers are younger than non-adventure travelers, with an average age of 36.
- Adventure travelers read publications such as National Geographic, National Geographic Traveler and Men's Health, which cover traditional adventure and recreation topics, as well as unrelated but popular publications such as Cosmopolitan and Vogue.
- Compared to non-adventure travelers, adventure travelers were more likely to use professional services such as guides, instructors, tour operators, or other services.
- Adventure travelers are planning for their trips by researching online and consulting friends and family, and are recommending trips by posting on social media sites.
- The percentage of adventure travelers using Facebook (78 percent) has more than doubled since the 2010 report.

Introduction

The Adventure Tourism Market Study was produced through a collaboration of The George Washington University (GW) and the Adventure Travel Trade Association (ATTA). The study's findings and research methodology were reviewed by a representative of the University of Utah's Park, Recreation and Tourism department. This study estimates the value of the majority of the adventure travel market and provides an updated profile of this market since the last study released in 2010. It provides a basic understanding of some of the characteristics, preferences, and behaviors of the adventure traveler. It will be useful to any organization trying to better understand the nature and potential of the adventure traveler, including:

- Government policy makers;
- Destination marketing organizations, destination management organizations, and state or national tourism offices;
- Adventure tour operators, guides and instructors; and
- Gear and equipment companies.

Furthermore, as indicated in this report, growth in the adventure travel market may attract the attention of other tourism businesses such as hotels, attractions, and transportation providers. As adventure travel becomes a more mainstream and lucrative segment, insights on the motivations and needs of the adventure traveler will be a valuable asset to much of the travel sector.

The report that follows provides a more detailed look at the adventure market including:

- A definition of what constitutes an adventure traveler and a list of qualifying activities/trip types;
- A breakdown of the adventure travel market sizing including regional adventure travel percentages and average per trip spends;
- A profile of the adventure traveler including demographic and psychographic characteristics; and
- An analysis of the pre and post trip behaviors of adventure travelers and the implications of these behaviors for marketers.

Who Is An Adventure Traveler?

Categorizing what constitutes adventure travel can be difficult and is often subjective. For the purposes of this study, respondents were asked to choose the main activity of their last domestic or international trip. Each activity was then categorized as "hard adventure", "soft adventure", or "non-adventure" using previous research of this market[1]. Adventure travelers were respondents that selected hard or soft adventure activities as the main activity of their last trip. It is also important to note that as established by previous research, adventure travelers were classified solely by the type of activity they engaged in, not the degree of difficulty or risk of their participation in that activity.

1 Schneider, P., Latkova, P. & Vogt, C. "Consumers' Need for Uniqueness: Seeking the Trait Through Adventure Travel." *Travel and Tourism Research Association*, 2008.

Activity	Type of Adventure
Archeological expeditions	Soft
Attending local festivals/fairs	Non-adventure
Backpacking	Soft
Birdwatching	Soft
Camping	Soft
Canoeing	Soft
Caving	Hard
Climbing (mountain/rock/ice)	Hard
Cruise	Non-adventure
Cultural activities	Non-adventure
Cycling	Soft
Eco-tourism	Soft
Educational programs	Non-adventure
Environmentally sustainable activities	Soft
Fishing/fly-fishing	Soft
Getting to know the locals	Non-adventure
Heli-skiing	Hard
Hiking	Soft
Horseback riding	Soft
Hunting	Soft
Kayaking/sea/whitewater	Soft
Kite surfing	Hard
Learning a new language	Non-adventure
Motorized sports	Soft
Orienteering	Soft
Paragliding	Hard
Rafting	Soft
Research expeditions	Soft
Safaris	Soft
Sand boarding	Soft
Sailing	Soft
Scuba diving	Soft
Snorkeling	Soft
Skiing/snowboarding	Soft
Stand-up paddle boarding	Soft
Surfing	Soft
Trekking	Hard
Walking tours	Non-adventure
Visiting friends/family	Non-adventure
Visiting historical sites	Non-adventure
Volunteer tourism	Soft

Size of the Adventure Market

As global tourism grows and tourists seek new experiences and destinations, the adventure market continues to expand. Based on the results of the market study the value of the outbound adventure travel market for the Americas and Europe is estimated at $263 billion. These regions make up nearly 70 percent of the world's international tourism departures. It is important to note, however, that growing source markets such as China and South Korea are not included in the valuation and may be less adventurous than the regions surveyed. The current valuation constitutes an estimated average yearly increase of 65 percent from 2009 to 2012. The increase in value can be attributed to the following factors:

Growth in the Global Tourism Industry

Recovery from the global financial crisis and an emergence of new source markets has led to considerable growth in the global tourism industry from 2009 to 2012. The UNWTO reported that in 2012 global tourism hit an all-time record of more than one billion international tourist arrivals[2]. An expansion in the overall global tourism market has contributed significantly to the growth in the adventure market.

2 UNWTO. (2012, Dec 12). International tourism hits one billion. Retrieved from http://media.unwto.org/en/press-release/2012-12-12/international-tourism-hits-one-billion

Increase in Percentage of Adventure Travelers

The percentage of international travelers from the Americas and Europe classified as adventure travelers rose from 26.3 percent in 2009 to 41.9 percent in 2012. As mentioned in the previous section, an adventure traveler is any respondent who cited an adventure activity as the main activity of their last trip.

Hard Adventure Proportion of the Population

	2009	2012	Growth per year
Europe	1.9%	4.9%	54%
North America	2.3%	0.9%	-20%[3]
South America	1.4%	8.0%	153%
All Regions	1.6%	4.7%	62%

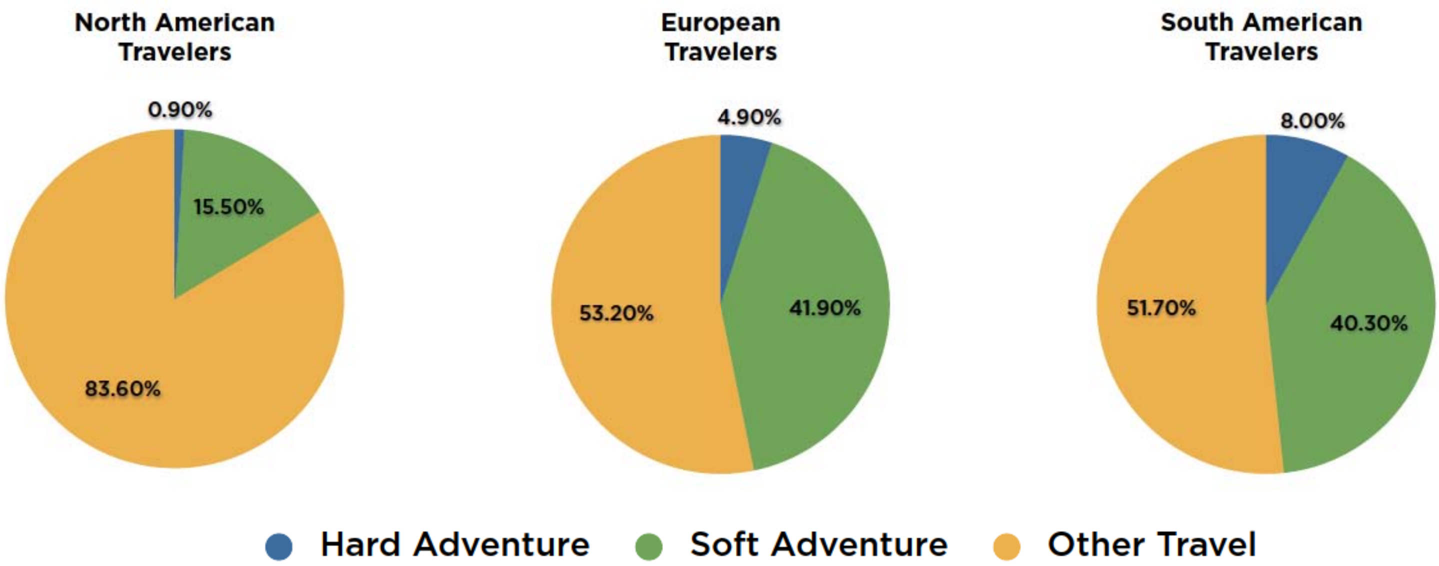
Soft Adventure Proportion of the Population

	2009	2012	Growth per year
Europe	23.2%	41.9%	27%
North America	18.5%	15.5%	-5%[4]
South America	34.9%	40.3%	5%
All Regions	24.8%	37.2%	17%

While there were higher growth rates in the percentage of hard adventurers, increases in the percentage of soft adventurers drove most of the overall growth in the estimate of

3 Figure is not significant due to a rare population size.
4 Difference between 2009 and 2012 is not statistically significant.


Peru // Bosque de Pómac
Courtesy Luis Yupanqui



the adventure market. From a regional perspective, much of the growth in adventure travelers came from Europe, but South America also grew its percentage of adventure travelers, particularly with a surge in the percentage of hard adventurers. The percentage of North American adventure travelers decreased for both hard adventure and soft adventure. The chart on the next page shows the percentage of international travelers classified as adventure travelers for each region. The tables show the percentage of international travelers classified as soft or hard adventure travelers for each region, and the average yearly growth since the 2010 report.

It is worth noting that six new adventure activities were added to the 2012 survey. Motorized sports, sand boarding, and stand-up paddle boarding were added as soft adventure activities, and paragliding, heli-skiing, and kite surfing were added as hard adventure activities. While these activities undoubtedly contributed to growth in the percentage of adventure travelers, none of the new activities were in the top ten most popular activities, and only one was in the top twenty.

Increase in the Average Adventure Trip Spending

On average, adventure traveler per trip spending (excluding airfare and gear) increased from $593 in 2009 to $947 in 2012, a yearly increase of nearly 20 percent. The average length of an adventure trip was ten days. Spending per trip increased for both soft and hard adventure trips and across all regions. The largest increases in average spending came from South American adventure travelers, who increased their hard adventure

Peru // Cueva Yacuyarqunan
Courtesy Daniel Silva

trip spending by 85 percent per year, and soft adventure trip spending by 25 percent per year. The tables below show the average trip spending of soft and hard adventure travelers by region.

Soft Adventurer Average Trip Spending

	2012	Growth per year (2009-2012)
Europe	$897	24%
North America	$1,152	9%
South America	$1,501	25%

Hard Adventurer Average Trip Spending

	2012	Growth per year (2009-2012)
Europe	$924	28%
North America	$875	25%
South America	$1,333	85%

The increase in adventure trip spending is likely due in part to a partial recovery from the global recession of 2009. This economic growth has left adventure travelers with more disposable income to spend while traveling with more disposable income to spend while traveling. Adventure travelers from South America also had the highest mean incomes of any region, indicating that wealthier residents make up a higher portion of the adventure travelers from the region, leading to higher average spending.

There is also evidence from the study that adventure travelers are taking longer trips. The average length of hard adventure trips increased from seven days in 2009 to nine days in 2012. The average length of soft adventure trips increased from eight days in 2009 to ten days in 2012. These longer trips are likely contributing to the higher average trip spends.

Gear and Clothing Sales

Another important economic impact of adventure travel is the sale of gear and clothing for the purpose of a trip. Respondents were asked how much they spent on new gear or clothing specifically for their last trip. Total gear sales for adventure trips increased by 18.5 percent per year from 2009 to 2012, reaching an estimated $82 billion in 2012. The table on page 8 shows the average gear and clothing spend by region and adventure classification. South American soft adventure travelers spent the most on gear and clothing with an average spend of $551.

Adventure Traveler Average Gear and Clothing Spend		
	Hard	Soft
Europe	$343	$308
North America	$250	$475
South America	$505	$551

The total amount of gear and clothing sales for adventure trips increased due to the increase in the percentage of adventure travel. However, the average adventure traveler's gear and clothing spending actually decreased by an average of five percent per year from $354 in 2009 to $297 in 2012. This is potentially due in part to the greater number of adventure travelers. New adventure travelers may choose to rent equipment or use equipment provided during guided tours rather than purchase their own gear. New adventure travelers may also spend less on their first gear purchases, rather than buying top of the line equipment that doesn't yet match their skill levels.

Timberland was the most recognized brand by adventure travelers at 65 percent recognition. However, there were several regional differences in the top brands recognized. Forty percent of South Americans recognized Patagonia, making it the region's second most recognized brand. Montagne and Cardon were also well recognized among South American respondents at 35 percent and 29 percent recognition respectively. These brands had comparatively low recognition among North American and European adventure travelers. For North American adventure travelers, LL Bean was the second most recognized brand at 69 percent recognition. Eddie Bauer and Swiss Army Luggage were also more recognized among North American adventure travelers at 54 percent and 37 percent respectively. The European results closely mirrored the overall adventure traveler results. The table below shows the top five brands recognized by adventure travelers.

Top Five Brands Recognized by Adventure Travelers	
Brand	Percent of Adventure Travelers
Timberland	65%
Quicksilver	44%
GoreTex	35%
The North Face	34%
Salomon	25%

Profile of Adventure Travelers

A majority of adventure travelers are male (57 percent) and single/never married (48 percent, compared to 43 percent of those currently married). The higher percentage of single adventure travelers may be due to the fact that adventure travelers skew younger with an average age of 36, compared to non-adventure travelers who have an average age of 41.

Thirty-seven percent of adventure travelers have at least a four-year degree, including 11 percent with a professional

Botswana
Courtesy Cameron Martindell

degree. The average income level of adventure travelers is $46,800. Adventure travelers read publications such as *National Geographic*, *National Geographic Traveler* and *Men's Health*, which cover traditional adventure and recreation topics, as well as unrelated but popular publications such as *Cosmopolitan* and *Vogue*.

Top Magazines Being Read by Adventure Travelers[5]

1	*National Geographic*
2	*Cosmopolitan*
3	*National Geographic Traveler*
4	*Men's Health*
5	*National Geographic Adventure*
6	*Vogue*
7	*Glamour*
8	*Readers Digest*
9	*Elle*
10	*Local Daily Newspaper*

Adventure travelers continue to value international travel, with 71 percent of adventure travelers having a valid passport (including 79 percent of hard adventurers carry a passport). A small portion of adventure travelers travel alone, 21 percent travel with friends, 37 percent with a spouse or partner, and 30 percent with their family (including kids).

Adventure travelers cited relaxation, exploring new places, time with family, and learning about different cultures as most important to their travel experiences. This suggests that while they may engage in more adventurous activities than non-adventure travelers, their motivations for travel are similar. When compared to non-adventure travelers, however, adventure travelers rated the importance of time with family lower than non-adventure travelers. This may be because they are younger with fewer families of their own.

Adventure travelers ranked areas of natural beauty as the most important factor in choosing their last destination, followed by the activities available and the climate of the destination. Non-adventure travelers ranked having friends and family at the destination as the most important factor in choosing their last destination followed by areas of natural beauty and climate. This shows adventure travelers can be attracted to a destination with a well-protected environment and range of adventure activities, and are not tied to visiting a destination where they have friends or family.

Adventure travelers were more likely than non-adventure travelers to use professional services (i.e. guides, tour operators, instructors, or boutique service providers) on their last trip; however, 56 percent of adventure travelers did everything on their own. On their last trip, 22 percent of adventure travelers used a guide, 18 percent used a tour operator and 13 percent used an instructor. These categories were not mutually exclusive as an adventure traveler may have used multiple professional services on their last trip. European adventure

5 A distinction was not made between print and online publications


Namibia // Susuwe Triangle
Courtesy Cameron Martindell

travelers aged 56-65 were particularly likely to use a tour operator with 57 percent of travelers from this group using a tour operator on their last trip. This group also had relatively high average trip spending of more than $1,400. In addition, over 40 percent of European adventure travelers aged 46-55 and South American adventure travelers aged 56-65 used tour operators. Conversely, only eight percent of North American travelers aged 56-65 used a tour operator on their last trip.

The higher use of professional services among adventure travelers may reflect the need for training and special equipment for many adventure activities. It may also mean people are trying new destinations and activities and are looking for professional guidance and safety. This would reinforce the growth in the adventure market and provide opportunities for operators and guides who can attract and convert non-adventure travelers who may be open to new experiences.

Marketing Implications

The large projected increase in market size over the past three years seems to be the result of two converging phenomenon. First, consumers have demanded a different kind of experience that involves cultural and natural discovery through physically active and exciting activities. Second, operators and destinations have quickly adapted their products to meet this demand and are now offering more trips with an element of "adventure". The models suggest that the growth rate of adventure travel's share of the total international tourism market is likely to slow over the next decade, reaching a plateau in the markets surveyed (North America, Europe, and South America) in 2020. Meanwhile, other growing outbound markets such as China and India may offset this trend by showing growth in adventure tourism for years to come.

As more travelers participate in adventure activities the adventure market is becoming more integrated with the travel market as a whole. As previously mentioned this will offer opportunities for tour operators, guide services, gear outfitters, and destinations to help travelers enter the adventure market in a safe and inviting way. It will also force innovations in the market that continue to push the bounds of excitement, challenge, and novelty.

Pre-Trip Research

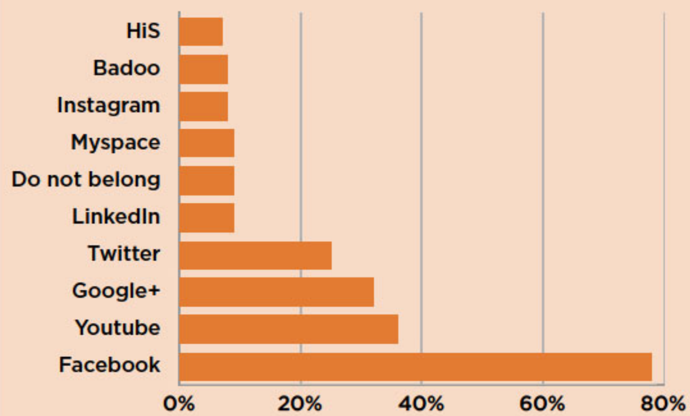
Adventure travelers are typically savvy tourists who spend time researching and planning their ideal experiences. They are more likely than non-adventure travelers to prepare for a trip prior to leaving. The most common forms of pre-trip preparation for adventure travelers were online research and consulting friends and family. Only 12 percent of adventure travelers did not prepare prior to their trip compared to 23 percent of non-adventure travelers. Sixty-eight percent of adventure travelers planned their trip four or fewer months before departure, and 22 percent planned their trip less than a month before departure. The table below shows the how adventure travelers planned for their last trip.

Namibia // Kwandu River
Courtesy Cameron Martindell

How did you prepare for your last trip? (Adventure Travelers)	
Researched Online	69%
Consulted Friends & Family	64%
Booked Airfare or Hotel Online	36%
Watched a Travel Program About the Destination	28%
Consulted Newspapers & Magazines	26%
Visited a Travel Agent	25%
Purchased a Guide Book	25%
Booked Through a Tour Operator	17%
Booked Through a Travel Agent	17%
Visited a DMO or Tourism Promotion Organization	12%
Did Not Prepare Prior to Going on the Trip	12%
Other	9%

The high proportion of adventure travelers doing online research emphasizes the importance of maintaining a strong web presence and online marketing strategy. Many adventure travelers are using social media as well. Seventy-eight percent of adventure travelers reported that they belong to Facebook, making it the most used social network among adventure travelers. Many adventure travelers also belong to YouTube, Google+ and Twitter. Orkut, a declining social networking site popular in Brazil, was used by 21 percent of South American adventure travelers, but was not widely used in Europe or North America. Badoo, a social networking site for meeting people and dating, was also used by 16.5 percent of South American adventure travelers, but had a low percentage of users among adventure travelers in Europe and North America. North America had a greater percentage of adventure travelers using Pinterest than Europe or South America, but still only 11 percent of North American adventure travelers belonged to the photo organizing and sharing site. Only two percent of South American adventure travelers did not belong to any social media site, compared to over ten percent of both European and North American adventure travelers. The graph below shows the top ten social media networks for adventure travelers based on the percentage of adventure travelers who belong to the site.

Top 10 Social Media Networks for Adventure Travelers



Post-Trip Sharing

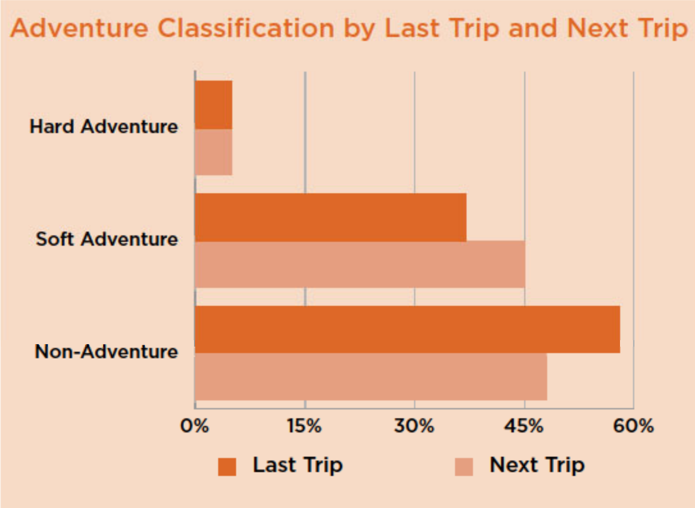
Adventure travelers can also be important "promoters" for destinations and activities. Eighty-one percent of adventure travelers stated they were likely or very likely to recommend

to friends and family a trip that was similar to their last trip. Illustrating their comfort with technology and social media, 39 percent of adventure travelers would recommend a similar trip by posting social media updates when they returned home. In contrast, only 23 percent of non-adventure travelers intended to recommend a trip by posting social media updates after they returned home. Adventure travelers were also more likely to recommend a trip by posting reviews on travel websites. Eighteen percent of adventure travelers would recommend a similar trip by posting reviews, compared to only eight percent of non-adventure travelers. The table below shows how adventure travelers are recommending trips.

How will you recommend a similar trip? (Adventure Travelers)	
Post social media updates after my trip	39%
Tell my friends and family directly	36%
Post reviews on travel websites	18%
Post social media updates during my travel	9%
Other	9%

Next Trip Plans

Nearly 54 percent of travelers plan to participate in an adventure activity on their next trip, compared to the 42 percent of travelers currently participating in adventure activities. The increase in interest comes largely from soft adventure activities. The graph on the right shows the percentage of people who were adventure travelers on their last trip compared to the percentage of people who plan on being adventure travelers on their next trip.



Seventy-three percent of adventure travelers plan to participate in an adventure activity on their next trip. This shows that adventure travelers have a high propensity to continue engaging in adventure activities on their future trips. Surprisingly, only 22 percent of adventure travelers plan on doing the same adventure activity as their last trip. This suggests that adventure travelers are not simply enthusiasts for a particular activity. Instead they are interested in the adventure experience and seek diverse and novel activities when they travel.

Thirty-six percent of current non-adventure travelers plan to participate in an adventure activity on their next trip. This demonstrates a willingness of non-adventure travelers to try

Switzerland
Courtesy Gregg Bleakney

adventure activities, which could lead to continued growth in the market. It also indicates that while retaining existing adventure customers is an important strategy, there may be sales potential in converting non-adventure travelers.

All travelers expect their next trip to be of a similar length as their last trip, with only slight increases in trip length across all categories. The table below shows a comparison of the average trip length of a traveler's last trip vs. the expected trip length of their next trip.

Average Length of Trip in Days

	Last Trip	Next Trip
Hard Adventurers	11.7	12.3
Soft Adventurers	10.2	10.8
Non-Adventure Travelers	10.0	10.9

Forty-five percent of adventure travelers plan on using a tour operator on their next trip, compared to only 31 percent of non-adventure travelers. This is also considerably higher than the mere 18 percent of adventure travelers who used a tour operator on their last trip. This may suggest that on their next trip adventure travelers plan on visiting destinations that they are less familiar with or plan on engaging in more challenging activities. While travelers may exaggerate their intention to use a tour operator, the very fact that tour operators are in their consideration set indicates there is a strong potential market for tour operators with appealing promotions, products and prices.

Switzerland
Courtesy Gregg Bleakney

Conclusion

This study indicates the adventure tourism market has seen tremendous growth since the last estimate completed in 2009. The value of the adventure market for outbound travelers from Europe, North America and South America is now estimated at $263 billion. Adventure tourism has grown both in absolute market value and as a percentage of the overall travel market. Today, nearly 42 percent of travelers reported an adventure activity as the main activity of their last trip versus only 26 percent in 2009.

The growth in the adventure market has significant implications for destinations and travel businesses alike. Many travelers are no longer satisfied with sitting on a beach or shopping. They seek adventure experiences that highlight the natural and cultural assets that make a place distinct from any other. Destinations and businesses that can bring those experiences to life with a wide range of unique activities will see the greatest success in capturing this lucrative market.

The rise of new source markets for international travel could have a significant impact on the future of adventure travel. Already, a growing number of travelers from South America are showing an interest in adventure tourism. However, other rising tourism markets from emerging countries such as China, India and South Korea, may show less interest in the sector. The travel preferences of these emerging markets could determine the future growth of the increasingly mature adventure tourism market.

This report suggests that adventure tourism is strong, broadening and growing. Understanding the needs, preferences and behaviors of this segment will be critical for profitably attracting adventure travelers in the years to come. Destinations and businesses that can understand and align with those needs stand to profit greatly from the economic benefits the adventure market can bring.

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The ATTA's Web Properties

ADVENTURE TRAVEL TRADE ASSOCIATION www.adventuretravel.biz

The ATTA's homepage online at www.adventuretravel.biz

Adventure travel news

The adventure travel industry's source of trade news online at www.adventuretravelnews.com

www.adventure.travel

The traveler's guide to finding adventure at www.adventure.travel

ADVENTURE TRAVEL WORLD SUMMIT

The annual trade-only industry conference. Learn more online at www.adventuretravel.biz/summit

the HUB

The HUB is ATTA's Online Members Community at http://members.adventuretravel.biz

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